

IDEA B Discretionary Technical Assistance and Support Grant Opportunity for 2019-2020

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is actively seeking Letters of Interest (LoI) from potential grantees to provide opportunities for specific work toward statewide ***Child Find, Evaluation, and Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Supports***. Interested Regional Education Service Centers (ESC) or Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) should submit a LoI in the template included in Attachment A to TEA **by October 1, 2018 at 5 pm CDT**. Potential grantees are encouraged to seek cooperative partnerships or collaborative agreements to successfully meet all goals and objectives of the grant. Funding is allocated from IDEA B Discretionary funds and scheduled for implementation in the 2019-2020 school year.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for this funding opportunity are limited to the 20 regional education service centers, and institutions of higher education located in Texas. Other nonprofits or for-profit organizations, foreign institutions, and individuals are not eligible to apply, however, may participate with an eligible applicant as a project partner (encouraged, as applicable).

1.1 Program Description

The ***Child Find, Evaluation, and ARD Supports*** grant is intended to increase capacity in Texas Local Education Agencies (LEAs with regard to the implementation of effective practices related to Child Find, Evaluation (including Full Individual and Initial Evaluations (FIE)), and the ARD process. This will be accomplished through the development of easily accessible resources and professional development opportunities, both of which must reflect best practice regarding adult learning theory. The content of all resources and professional development materials produced through this grant must be firmly grounded in current literature and policy on special education best practice with explicit citations. All resources must be made available to all stakeholders.

Additional considerations for materials and resources produced through this grant:

- TEA maintains the right to final approval on all materials and resources before publication or presentation.
- All materials and resources will carry the TEA logo in addition to the logo of the grant awardee.
- All materials and resources are the property of TEA and must be provided to TEA at the end of the grant period or upon request.
- All materials or resources intended for use with parents and families will be made available in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Grant awardees will make formal quarterly reports to TEA on identified outcomes-based, quantifiable lead measures with lag measure reporting at the end of the grant period. These measures must be mutually approved by the grantee and TEA and should be clearly proposed in LoI response. Additionally, budget proposals and final budget tables must include line-item/deliverable-based pricing.

1.2 Program Goals

The primary goal of the ***Child Find, Evaluation, and ARD Supports*** grant is to increase capacity in LEAs to effectively ensure all children with disabilities are located, evaluated, identified, and that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided. In addition, ARD processes will be streamlined and made more efficient, and significantly more transparent and understandable by students, parents, and families.

1.3 Program Activities

Strong applications will demonstrate a solid basis in evidence-based best practice resources that target needs from across the state, include an innovative and robust plan for dissemination of resources, and include efforts for collaboration and networking with other grantees who have overlapping or related goals.

Additionally, strong applications will include robust planning for statewide implementation and demonstrate clear and comprehensive planning for measuring the impact of activities through outcomes-based, quantifiable metrics that include measures describing implementation and effectiveness of grant deliverables in large and small urban, suburban, and rural LEAs.

It is required that the proposed programs contain at a **minimum**, the following:

- A comprehensive plan to increase the overall implementation and fidelity of implementation of evidence-based best practices around Child Find, Evaluation, and effective ARD Processes. This plan should reflect:
 - Knowledge of evidence-based practices for professional development
 - Universal and user-driven design elements
 - Innovative use of technology to increase access
 - Initial training opportunities statewide (including Train-the-Trainer models) to provide immediate support to all LEAs
 - Plan for follow-up and ongoing support/coaching
 - System(s) of resource dissemination to particularly include geographically remote areas of the state
 - Details on plan for periodic and consistent fidelity checks among stakeholders
 - Quantitative and/or qualitative methods, including lead and lag measures for evaluating effectiveness and fidelity of implementation
 - A budget that is commensurate with goals and does not duplicate current efforts
 - A plan for communication and collaboration with other relevant and/or related proposed grant initiatives

- Activities that will support learning opportunities and improvements across the state including:
 - Child Find obligations
 - User friendly brochures, flowcharts, and other resources to assist LEAs in understanding Child Find and the process for referral for an initial evaluation, including indicators, signals, and who is able to refer for evaluation.
 - Plan to coordinate and utilize resources developed by an independent third-party related to similar materials being developed for families. Proposal should include plan to meaningfully integrate those resources into LEA support activities.
 - Templates and other resources that can be readily adapted by LEAs (e.g. letters, flyers, brochures, public service announcements, videos, etc.) to facilitate outreach to families and community regarding Child Find
 - Support trainings for LEAs on the necessary steps to take when a parent or educator requests an initial evaluation
 - Evaluation and identification of eligible students
 - Develop guidance around formal processes for an initial evaluation

- Evidence based best practice guidance around identification processes
 - Clear guidance and information on disproportionality, and how LEAs can utilize cultural competence and awareness, and objective indicators and matrices to accurately identify children who may need evaluations
 - Clear guidance on comprehensive evaluations, including resources to support evaluating for all areas of suspected eligibility, understanding the links between children who may have multiple eligibilities and how those manifest, etc.
 - Clear guidance on evaluation and identification for particularly challenging or potentially subjective areas including specific learning disabilities, dyslexia and related disorders, health impairments, emotional disturbance, etc.
 - Development of collaborative ARD processes
 - Model ARD practices intended to increase meaningful family engagement in the IEP development and overall ARD process (extensive resources to increase transparency, establish expectations of excellence, and provide clarity on process)
 - Professional development geared toward school leaders to increase capacity to engage parents as equal partners in the ARD process
 - Resources such as guiding questions to ask in ARD meetings, data and evidence to consider in conversations, and timelines and agendas to facilitate productive and student-centered meetings for LEAs and school-site staff. Resources for families should be integrated from a separate RFP.
 - Model IEP forms and other ARD paperwork that reflect best practice and make use of concise and easily understandable plain language that is accessible and meaningful to LEAs and school-site staff
 - Local dispute resolution practices
 - Dispute Resolution Systems Handbook and ongoing associated training that is user-friendly, easy to use, and well-supported
 - Brochures and/or other easily accessible and understandable resources on available dispute resolution programs (IEP facilitation, state complaints, due process hearings)
 - Standards-based IEP development
 - Information on the purpose of the IEP in relation to student goals and proficiency
 - Statewide Evaluation Professional Conference and/or other methods for to reach evaluation practitioners in the field for continuing education and training
- Activities that will support access to appropriately trained and certified evaluation staff including:
 - Collaboration with University partner(s), implementing program standards and agreements as set forth by American Speech-Language- Hearing Association (ASHA) to recruit and/or incentivize qualified individuals for master's degree and licensure as a speech language pathologist, including bilingual certification in Texas
 - Collaboration with University partner(s) to recruit and/or incentivize educators or other qualified individuals to obtain training and certification/licensure as Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSPs) and Educational Diagnosticians
 - Coordinate with professional organizations of evaluators to develop a system for improving access to evaluators across the state, especially in rural areas and for bilingual evaluators

- Activities that will assist LEAs in recruiting, supporting, and retaining evaluation personnel such as:
 - Coaching/ mentoring models for new evaluation staff or existing staff who lack a strong local professional learning community due to geographical area or district size
 - Models and resources for maximizing evaluation staff services (e.g. options for ARD facilitation)
 - Templates and resources for LEAs to consider in recruiting and retaining evaluation personnel (e.g. use of stipends, paying professional fees)

- Projects identified to meet federal regulations and/or state statutory requirements must include:
 - Procedural Safeguards/ ARD Guide publication and maintenance
 - Other legal references including, but not limited to, side-by-side documents and legal frameworks, Commissioner Rules, OSEP guidance, due process hearings, court decisions, and TEA guidance
 - Maintain system of support for web-based Legal Framework website, including hosting of local and virtual servers
 - Support and resource development for LEAs working to prevent and/or correct significant disproportionality including
 - Revision and updates of existing multicultural training modules
 - Innovative and interactive resources for disproportionality website such as adopted rules, calculation tools, links, and resources

1.4 Program Budget

\$1,000,000 per year

1.5 Timeline

Lols must be submitted electronically to sped@tea.texas.gov by 5pm (CDT) on October 1, 2018 to be considered. Hard copy mailed or delivered Lols will not be accepted. Applicants should combine all attachments and documents into one PDF to include a cover sheet and table of contents. Grant awardees will be notified by November 1, 2018 with the grant period to begin July 1, 2019. This is a one-year grant that may be extended for additional years at TEA discretion.

1.6 Closing and Next Steps

Strong applications with a likelihood of award will be innovative in nature, demonstrate clear planning toward stated goals and focus on producing desired outcomes rather than simply activity completion.

A virtual applicants conference will be held the week of July 16th, 2018. Questions submitted to sped@tea.texas.gov prior to July 13th, 2018 will be answered at that time and an FAQ will be published. When submitting questions, applicants should include the name of this grant in the subject line. Applicants should refer to www.tea.texas.gov/TexasSPED for details and updates regarding the applicants' conference and this request for Lol generally.